

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you to express our strong opposition to the recent resolution passed by the Iraqi Governing Council to "cancel" certain laws that protect women and to place them under the jurisdiction of Islamic law or "Sharia." To prevent this order from taking effect, we strongly urge you and your Administration to take steps now to protect the rights of Iraqi women.

It would be a tragedy beyond words if Iraqi women lost the rights that they had under Saddam Hussein especially when the purpose of our mission in Iraq was to make life better for the Iraqi people. American troops gave their lives in the fight for freedom. We must ensure that their sacrifices result in a free Iraq for all Iraqis, both men and women.

Although women endured increasingly repressive conditions during the last decade, under the former regime, women had the right to work, hold political office, and participate in society. Resolution 137 would eliminate these existing rights. As a result, Iraqi women would be subjugated to a discriminative social and political status. They would have no rights on matters such as custody of children, rights to inheritance, and some interpretations of the law could prohibit women from taking part in public life as equal citizens. In short, under Resolution 137, Iraqi women would be denied the human rights that women have struggled to gain throughout the civilized world. Although this law would not go into effect until after June 30, 2004, which, as you know, is the projected date for the transition to Iraqi sovereignty, once the transition occurs, we will be unable to stop the implementation of these types of harmful laws. It is imperative that we act now to reverse this decision, or the lives of Iraqi women will be worse because of America's actions. We cannot allow that to happen.

In your State of the Union address, you stated that "our coalition is working with the Iraqi Governing Council to draft a basic law, with a bill of rights." We strongly agree with you that the United States should help to ensure that a rule of law is established which recognizes the equal rights of all Iraqi citizens, men and women. Denying equality to more than half of Iraq's citizens will destroy the opportunity to establish a free and democratic Iraq. Therefore, we urge you and Ambassador Bremer to reject the actions of the opponents of equality and ensure that measures such as Resolution 137 do not set a precedent for the future Iraqi government. As Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, Ambassador Bremer must authorize all actions taken by the Iraqi Governing Council. If we do not exercise our influence now to ensure that rights are protected, we fear the potential tragic consequences once the transition to Iraqi sovereignty is completed.

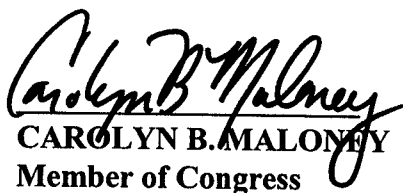
As a new constitution for Iraq is drafted and debated, equal rights and freedoms for all

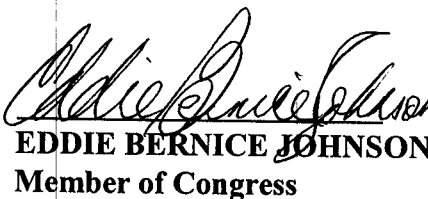
Iraqis must be included in the new Constitution. This is fundamental for Iraq to succeed in establishing a free and just social order. To achieve the goal of equality for Iraqi women, we strongly urge you to do more to ensure that Iraqi women are represented on the local and provincial councils. Women deserve to have every opportunity to make a difference in the Iraqi government.

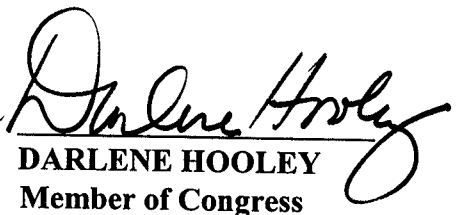
Iraqi women will provide much of the skills and commitment that are required to build a prosperous and peaceful Iraq. The U.S. must demand equal justice and rights for them. Please secure the support of the Coalition Provisional Authority for this principle and urge them to work with the Iraqi Governing Council to reverse Resolution 137.

Thank you for your attention in this matter. We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss these very important issues, and we look forward to working with you to help Iraqi women create a better future for their country.

Sincerely,


CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

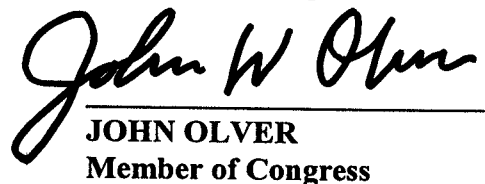

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Member of Congress

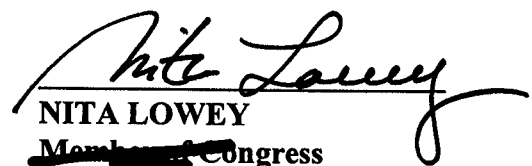

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Member of Congress

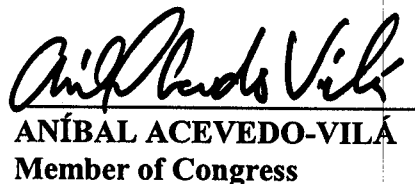

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Member of Congress

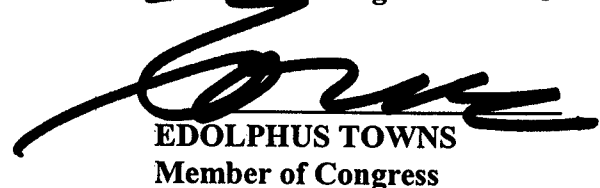

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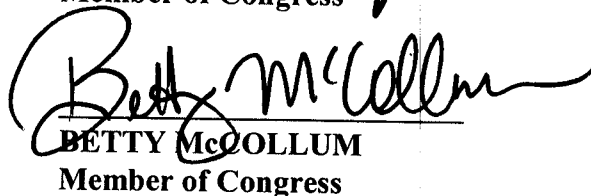

NITA LOWEY
Member of Congress

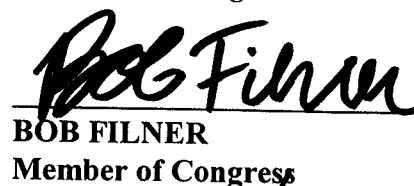

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Member of Congress

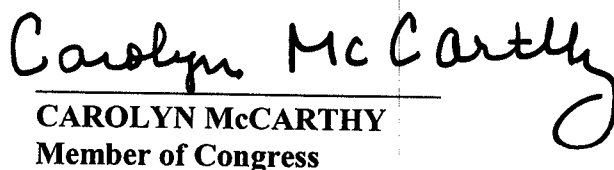

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Member of Congress

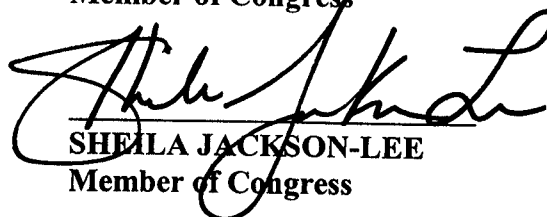

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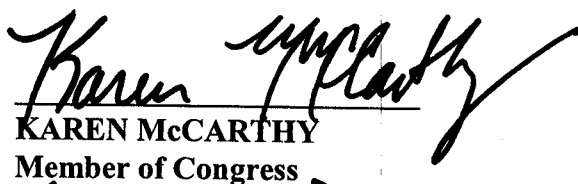

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Member of Congress

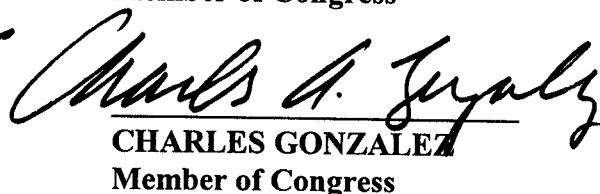

CAROLYN MCCARTHY
Member of Congress

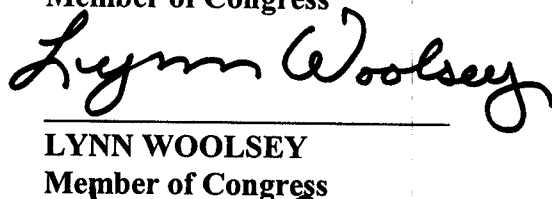

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Member of Congress

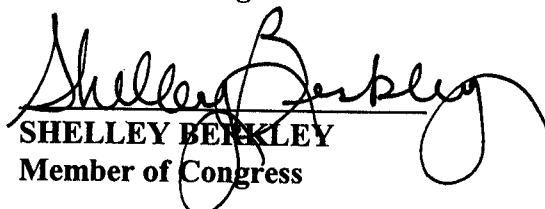

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Member of Congress

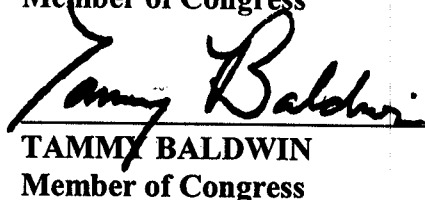

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Member of Congress

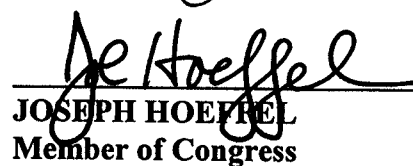

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Member of Congress


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Member of Congress

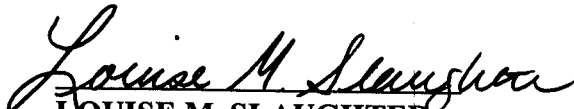

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Member of Congress



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BERNIE SANDERS
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Member of Congress

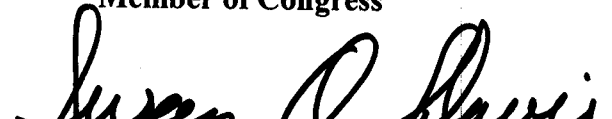

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JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress



DENNIS KUCINICH
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LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

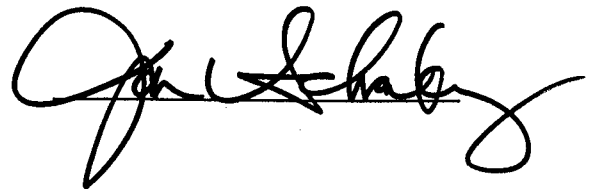

JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD
Member of Congress


CHAKA FATTAH
Member of Congress


ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress


DIANA DeGETTE
Member of Congress





Maple Waters
